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**Donald Cooper** is respected by clients in over 40 industries as both a "thought leader" and a passionate visionary in the areas of marketing, service and business excellence.

Drawing from his real life experience as a world-class manufacturer, award-winning retailer and business speaker, he has helped thousands of businesses throughout the world to add more real value to their customers' lives...and more dollars to their bottom lines.

To subscribe to Donald's thought-provoking, idea-generating, **FREE** monthly electronic **Newsletter**, email us at [newsletter@donaldcooper.com](mailto:newsletter@donaldcooper.com).

His website, [www.donaldcooper.com](http://www.donaldcooper.com) also offers free articles and business tools.

## **Four simple steps to fix what needs fixing in your business!**

As I work with clients throughout the world to refocus, reinvent and re-energize their business, I've found that there are four steps to the process of fixing what needs fixing. Here they are...

**Step #1 - Awareness:** "Awareness" is simply knowing that some part of your business isn't "right" yet. You're not yet where you want to be, or need to be, to be a profitable market leader, or to become your Vision.

Perhaps your products or services aren't the best they could be. Or, you're falling short in delivering the customer experience that you've promised. Perhaps you've not created the internal business environment required to attract and keep the best people at every level of your organization. Perhaps you're falling short in planning and budgeting, control, accountability, profitability or implementation and follow-up. Your shortfall could be in technology, systems or communication. It could be that you've not yet met your commitments to your community or the environment.

Are you aware of the specific areas in your business that aren't "right" yet? Can you list them and prioritize them? Without "awareness", there will be no improvement. But "awareness" alone will get you nowhere! Which brings us to...

**Step #2 - A passionate commitment to fix it:** Many businesses know that something's wrong...but they really don't give a damn. They're tired or burnt out; they've lost their passion and they're not prepared to do the work required to fix it.

Years ago my Father had a Jaguar XJ6 with the world's most unreliable windshield wipers (which he thought a bit odd given that it rains most of the time where Jaguars are made). By chance, Father met the Chairman of Jaguar at some big-shot business event and when he mentioned that he was a Jag owner the Chairman enquired, "*And how do you like your Jag?*"

Not wanting to miss an opportunity to go right to the top with his problem, Father told him about his huge frustration with the wipers. To which the Chairman of Jaguar offhandedly replied, "*Oh Jack, we don't seem to have that one quite right yet, do we!*"

Clearly, the Chairman was aware of the problem. He had arrived at Step #1. But, judging by his offhand remark, there was no passionate commitment to fix it. Are you passionately committed to fixing the things that need fixing in your business?

**Step #3 - Analysis / Creativity / Decision / and a Plan:** Here's where the real work starts. For each thing that you're committed to fixing or creating in your business, work through the stages of analysis / creativity / decision making / and documenting a Plan.

**a) Analysis:** Get the facts! Remember, the beginning of wisdom is the recognition of reality. If it's a problem you're solving, get to the real root cause. If it's an opportunity you're pursuing, make sure that you have all the important facts. Either way, if your "size up" is wrong, your action will be wrong...and your outcome will likely be wrong.

## Four simple steps to fix what needs fixing in your business!... (Cont'd):

### **Step #3 - Analysis / Creativity / Decision / and a Plan:** (cont'd)

**b) Creativity:** Encourage creativity within your organization and know when to “rent” creativity from the outside. Ask your team, your suppliers and your customers what they think. Find out who the real experts are on what you’re trying to fix or create. The good ones will save you a bundle and the bad ones will cost you a fortune.

Don't try to "reinvent the wheel". What are other successful businesses doing about this problem or opportunity...and then figure out how to do it even better!

Ask "the wonderful question" which is, "*What would be the most wonderful thing that we could do here?*" In our famous lady's fashion store we came up with “wonderful” in the form of a choice of seven free beverages, four hooks in the change rooms, electric massage chairs for husbands, a pirate ship play area for kids and free diapers, diaper wipes and cream on the change tables and an invitation to "Please take as many items in the change room as you wish!", simply by asking "the wonderful question".

So, get creative. What are the possibilities? What would be a "BIG IDEA" here? BIG IDEAS grab your customers, clearly differentiate you from your competitors, make you famous and make you money.

What has never been done? What ideas, when implemented, would blow your customers away or give you an operational advantage that would transform your bottom line?

Finally, what are the costs and the benefits of each of your ideas?

**c) Decision:** Don't analyze and create forever. Commit to a course of action in a reasonable time. There's more money lost through indecision than wrong decision. Nike's slogan is NOT, “Just talk it to death!”

**d) The Plan:** Document specifically who will do what and by when. Involve all those who's support you need in the implementation process and get their commitment to specific deadlines and outcomes.

Communicate the Plan to everyone involved. Make sure that they know the purpose, objectives, deadlines and expected results. Make sure that they know why their roll is important and get their commitment to specific outcomes.

Determine from your team what additional information or resources they need to be successful, and make sure that they get what they need.

**Step #4 - Effective implementation and follow up:** Get it done! Businesses don't die from a single shot to the head...they die, slowly but surely, from a thousand uncompleted tasks!

Effective implementation is one of the biggest problems in business today. Here's the simple solution. Every time you assign a task, agree on a specific date by which it will be completed. Document that commitment and always follow up. Then, you must hold people accountable, celebrate success, reward performance and deal firmly with non-performance.

So, there they are...four simple but powerful steps to fix what needs fixing in your business. Where are you in the process? First, are you aware of what needs fixing? Then, are you passionately committed to getting on with it? Is it the analysis, creativity, decision making or planning where you need more focus? Or is it in the implementation that you need to improve? How will you use the insight of these four steps to fix what needs fixing in your business?

**For more information** on how Donald Cooper can help you redefine and reinvent your business to create, deliver and communicate compelling, customer-owning Value, visit our website at [www.donaldcooper.com](http://www.donaldcooper.com) , email us at [sharen@donaldcooper.com](mailto:sharen@donaldcooper.com) or contact us by telephone in Toronto, Canada at 1-(416) 252-3704.